

# FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK

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## MANAGEMENT PLAN

Working First Draft—50% Complete

**Prepared by:**

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**Prepared for:**

AKDNR, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NOT COMPLETE

# OVERVIEW MAP

NOT COMPLETE

# INTRODUCTION

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The **FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK (SHP)** is a community treasure that provides a unique opportunity to interpret the story of World War II (WWII) in Sitka and its relationship to other WWII sites in Alaska. In addition, and importantly, the causeway is a recreational asset for Alaskans and visitors, where exploration and discovery are integral to the experience. It is in this spirit that recommendations in this plan were made.

The **PURPOSE** of the plan is to establish planning guidelines and a long-range vision for managing the Fort Rousseau Causeway SHP, preserving its historic structures, providing recreational opportunities, and for developing and maintaining its interpretive sites and materials.

## **THE FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY SHP MANAGEMENT PLAN:**

- Provides relevant background information;
- Supports the mission of the State Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation;
- Outlines the goals and objectives for park management and for interpretive sites and materials;
- Incorporates the needs and demographics of current and potential visitors to ensure causeway facilities and interpretive sites and materials meet the outlined management and visitor experience goals;
- Provides an overview of the existing conditions on the causeway;
- Outlines the issues associated with managing a remote and historically significant park;
- Makes recommendations for alleviating management issues and for developing recreational areas and interpretive sites and materials that support the goals and objectives outlined herein; and
- Suggests ways to preserve historical features on the causeway and maintain interpretive sites and services.

## BACKGROUND

While Sitka and the surrounding area have a rich cultural history, the information presented in the “Background” section is exclusive to the causeway islands and establishment of the Fort Rousseau Causeway SHP because of its WWII historical value. Readers can find an overview of the area’s cultural resources in the “Overview of Cultural and Natural Resources” section.

## **HISTORY OF FORT ROUSSEAU**

### **IMPORTANCE OF ALASKA TO AMERICAN DEFENSES**

The U.S. Navy was responsible for keeping order in Sitka from 1879 through 1884, but military presence in Alaska was considered unnecessary until the threat of war with Japan strengthened in the early 1900s and the U.S. War Department realized the extent of Alaska’s strategic importance.

Alaska’s proximity to Russia, Japan, and the U.S. Pacific Coast made its location crucial for defending America’s interests in the Pacific. Adopted by the U.S. Army in 1924, the United State’s national war plan, “Plan Orange,” outlined the strategy that American military leaders would follow if war commenced. The plan originally focused on a naval effort whereby with the Army would seize Japanese islands in the central Pacific and then strike Japan itself, but was later changed to focus on holding a main line of defense between Alaska, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal. This line of defense was referred to as the “strategic triangle.”<sup>1</sup>

When Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933, the threat of war became serious, but little extra effort was put into preparing for a potential confrontation with Japan until 1939. In that year, Congress awarded a total of \$32,466,746 to the Quartermaster General for military construction, half of which was appropriated for the triangle.<sup>2</sup>

### **SITKA NAVAL OPERATING BASE**

Military construction in Sitka commenced at break-neck speed in September 1939 to ensure that the Alaskan coast would be defensible if and when the Japanese arrived. The Sitka Naval Air Station, located on Japonski Island in Sitka Sound, was the first of three naval air stations in Alaska to become operational. Previously used as a navy coaling station, Japonski Island was already suited for development. Planes stationed at Sitka patrolled southeast Alaska and large portions of the Gulf of Alaska. Naval air stations at Kodiak and Dutch Harbor joined Sitka’s coastal defense efforts and on July 20, 1942, the U.S. Navy renamed the Sitka air station the “Sitka Naval Operating Base.”<sup>3</sup>

### **FORT ROUSSEAU AND FORT RAY**

The U.S. Army was tasked with defending the naval operating base, but with no developable space left available on Japonski Island, they chose Alice and Charcoal islands, located to the southeast of Japonski, to house the Army garrison. Named Fort Ray in 1941, the base was recognized as the army’s headquarters in Sitka from 1941 to 1943.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the army had also been given permission to construct a causeway linking Japonski Island to Makhnati Island via a string of seven smaller islands for the purpose of placing defense fortifications on Makhnati.

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1. (Dod 1987). Map 1 from page 4 of Dod 1987( Meg’s Map).

2. (Dod 1987).

3. Thompson, 1984.

4. Bush, **NEED TITLE and PAGE.**

The Navy's contractor, Siems Drake Puget Sound, began construction of the causeway in July 1941, but in November 1942 the Seabees began to gradually take over construction. The 8,100-foot causeway was mostly finished by the end of 1942, although it was never capped and paved as stated in the original plans.<sup>5</sup> In July 1943, Makhnati Island—including the causeway—was declared the headquarters for harbor defenses and was subsequently named Fort Rousseau.

Fort Rousseau included Nevski, Reshimosti, Virublennoi, Gold, Sasedni, Kirushkin, Mogilnoi, and Makhnati islands. Four of the islands included defense structures, with Makhnati Island housing the command center, known as Battery 292. The battery included administrative offices for the Harbor Defense Command Post, Harbor Entrance Control Post, and the headquarters for the harbor defenses. Most impressive, however, were the two 6-inch guns and the island's accompanying 155mm "Panama Mount" gun emplacements.<sup>6</sup>

Other islands housed barracks, officer's quarters, storehouses, mess halls, and more facilities typical of military installations.

## WWII IN ALASKA

The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, put all military personnel in Alaska on high alert. All civilian communication in and out of Alaska was cut off, an action that sparked rumors in Canada and in the lower 48 that Alaska had fallen and caused tremendous misinformation and panic.<sup>7</sup>

Japan did not immediately focus its war efforts on Alaska; however, during the first week of June 1942, Japan launched an attack on Dutch Harbor, killing 87 soldiers and sailors. Following the attack the Navy evacuated all islands west of Dutch Harbor.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, the raid on Dutch Harbor was merely a cover-up for the invasion of Attu and Kiska islands on the Aleutian Chain.

Sitka remained on high alert during the Aleutian Campaign and its naval base acted as an intermediary between the U.S. mainland and Kodiak. But when the U.S. recaptured Attu and Kiska in the summer of 1943, the war moved farther away from the U.S. west coast and on August 15, 1944, the Sitka Naval Operating Base, including Fort Rousseau, was decommissioned.<sup>9</sup> Many of the structures on Japonski, Alice, and Charcoal islands were demolished and replaced, while others were salvaged and maintained for non-military use. Fort Rousseau structures were demolished, moved, or cleaned out and abandoned. Concrete structures that were abandoned—like ammunition magazines, pill boxes, and the 6-inch gun emplacements—still remain and today create an opportunity for visitors to explore Sitka's WWII history.

## NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

The Sitka Naval Operating Base and U.S. Army Coastal Defenses was designated a National Historic Landmark on August 11, 1986, for its significance as the Navy's first air station in Alaska and its strategic importance during WWII. National Historic Landmarks are designated by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and are administered by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

National Historic Landmarks are places that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States, as defined by the National Historic Landmark Program.

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5. Dunning and Welsh, **NEED TITLE and PAGE.**

6. U.S. Department of the Interior, *National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form*, 4-5.

7. Dunning and Welsh, **NEED TITLE and PAGE.**

8. Dunning and Welsh, **NEED TITLE and PAGE.**

9. U.S. Department of the Interior, *National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form*, 2.

## FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK

Sitka Trail Works, Inc. (STW), a non-profit organization located in Sitka, played an important role in preserving Fort Rousseau for the benefit of the Sitka community and its visitors. In 2006, Sitka Trail Works, Inc. received a federal grant to begin trail work on the Fort Rousseau Causeway, which had been identified in the 2003 *Sitka Trails Plan* as a recommended cultural trail project. On March 4, 2008, House Bill 176, sponsored by Representative Peggy Wilson, designated the 60-acre Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park (SHP). Alaska Governor Sarah Palin signed House Bill 176 into law on April 2, 2008.

A state historical park, as defined by “The Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework,” is an “area containing an assemblage of significant historical, cultural, archaeological, or anthropological resources from representative eras of Alaska’s history or prehistory. The dominant management objective of a state historic park is to **preserve** and **interpret** historic resources for Alaskans and visitors to the state.”<sup>10</sup>

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10. Parks Planning Section, Division of Parks, DNR, *The Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework*, 8.



## PLANNING PROCESS

The State Department of Natural Resources, Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Interpretation and Education Unit, was contracted by Sitka Trail Works, Inc. in the spring of 2009 to develop a master interpretive plan for the Fort Rousseau Causeway SHP. Funding was provided by Sitka Trail Works, Inc. through grant monies they received from the Alaska Trails Program to improve recreational opportunities on the causeway. Although Sitka Trail Works, Inc. provided the funding, the State Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation was the primary project partner.

In October of 2009, the objective for this plan was broadened to include park management components. The division felt that since the park was relatively new to the state system that a management vision for the park needed to be established in conjunction with the master interpretive plan. It was decided that the management and interpretive objectives would be combined into one planning document—a management plan.

The following schedule represents the project timeline from start to finish, including site visits, public meetings, and draft reviews.

### **JUNE 2009**

- June 9 – Project “kick-off” meeting (teleconference) between project planners and the SSPCAB
- June 12 – Public notice for July public meeting posted on the Department of Natural Resources “Public Notices” page
- Project website created at <http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/plans/ftrousseau/ftrousseauump.htm>

### **JULY 2009**

- July 10, 13, 15 – Public meeting notice for July public meeting advertised in *Daily Sitka Sentinel*
- July 15 – Site visit to causeway, Sitka, AK
- July 16 – Visioning session with SSPCAB; public meeting hosted at Harrigan Centennial Hall, Sitka, AK
- Public meeting notes distributed to contact list and uploaded to the project website

### **AUGUST—OCTOBER 2009**

- Research and writing for the first draft

### **OCTOBER 2009**

- Plan shifts from a master interpretive plan to a management plan
- Project granted an extension to allow time to merge the management components

### **NOVEMBER 2009**

- December 14 – 50% First Draft released for public review and uploaded to project website

**INCOMPLETE**

## MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS

### **ALASKA DIVISION OF PARKS AND OUTDOOR RECREATION - MISSION STATEMENT:**

The Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation provides outdoor recreation opportunities and conserves and interprets natural, cultural, and historic resources for the use, enjoyment, and welfare of the people.

### **FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK - VISION STATEMENT:**

The Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park will provide high-quality recreational opportunities for park users—both Alaskans and visitors—while principally preserving and interpreting the park’s historic resources for the use and enjoyment of future generations. Park users will be provided safe access to the site, via marine landing areas, and safe access to a representative selection of historic features and buildings; users will also be able to explore and discover features and buildings in their natural state of weathering. Importantly, outdoor recreational opportunities will be enhanced through providing an accessible interpretive trail system and designated picnic and camping areas. The Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park will house caretaker facilities to allow for an on-site staff or volunteer presence and will continue to be a community treasure that fosters stewardship for Alaska’s historic and cultural sites.

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The GOALS AND OBJECTIVES outlined below represent the desired outcomes for park management and interpretation; the goals and objectives will assist managers in reaching and sustaining their vision for the site.

Goals and objectives are inherently different. Goals are general, immeasurable statements about what planners would like to accomplish; objectives are more specific and measurable.

Each goal and objective supports the historical park's dominant management objective as defined in the *Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework*: "To preserve and interpret historic resources for Alaskans and visitors to the state."<sup>11</sup>

## **GOAL 1: To provide recreational and interpretive opportunities**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Complete necessary environmental, cultural, and historical surveys and site mapping to ensure features are well documented;
- Improve marine access to the park;
- Improve recreational opportunities by establishing an accessible trail network, a day-use area, a picnic area, and designated camping areas;
- Improve the overall visitor experience by providing access to and preserving select historic features;
- Improve the overall visitor experience through interpretive sites, programming, and materials; and
- Improve maintenance, safety, and the overall visitor experience by establishing an on-site caretaker facility.

## **GOAL 2: To instill a sense of place, a sense of discovery, and an appreciation for this local, historic treasure**

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Create a sense of community ownership in the park by improving access and offering recreational and interpretive opportunities;
- Create a site design that preserves a sense of discovery and exploration;
- Encourage local schools to arrange field trips to the park; and
- Facilitate personal connections by sharing with visitors stories about Sitkans and enlisted men living Sitka during WWII.

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11. Parks Planning Section, Division of Parks, DNR, *The Alaska State Park System: Statewide Framework*, 8.

**GOAL 3: To reveal that Sitka was a strategic location for the defense of the U.S. west coast during WWII; to reveal the role Fort Rousseau played in that defense**

**OBJECTIVES:**

- Explain, through interpretive programming and materials, Alaska's overall involvement in WWII;
- Explain, through interpretive programming and materials, how the WWII era affected Sitka and Sitkans; and
- Reveal, through interpretive programming and materials, that Fort Rousseau was established to headquarter the defense of the Sitka Naval Operating Base.

# OVERVIEW OF CULTURAL & NATURAL RESOURCES

While the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation recognizes Sitka’s rich cultural and natural history, the “Overview of Cultural and Natural Resources” section of this planning document focuses specifically on the causeway islands and their importance to local cultures and key natural features.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

### **Tlingit**

The Tlingit people have inhabited the coastal area of the Alaskan panhandle, including Baranof Island and the smaller islands surrounding it, for at least 3,000 years.<sup>12</sup> It is possible that the Tlingit may have used some of the causeway islands, particularly Sasedni Island, as burial grounds; unfortunately, it is likely that construction on the islands during WWII destroyed any physical evidence of this type of use.<sup>13</sup> Members of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska do consider the islands a cultural and traditional use area—abalone, gumboots, and seaweed were collected there for the community’s food prior to military development. Today, Whiting Harbor is important to the Native community because of its marine resources.<sup>14</sup>

### **Russian Influence and the Alaska Purchase**

The first recorded Tlingit contact with Russians was in 1742 and occurred near Sitka.<sup>15</sup> It is uncertain if the Russians used the causeway islands during their occupation; however, they had a strong influence on mainland culture, even after the U.S. purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867.

### **Navy and Army Personnel**

Not complete- need to include information about leisure time activities and the “atmosphere” on the causeway during military occupation

## NATURAL RESOURCES

### **Physical Description**

#### **Temperature and Climate**

Sitka is located in the Tongass forest, one of the largest temperate rainforests in the world. This rainforest covers most of the southeast Alaska archipelago to which Baranof Island and the small surrounding islands belong.

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12. Theodoratus 1995.

13. **NEED CITATION**

14. Participant, meeting regarding preservation planning for Fort Rousseau (meeting titled “Cultural, Customary, and Traditional”) conducted by Nicole Acevedo (AKDNR) and attended by members from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, October 28, 2009.

15. De Laguna, 1990.

Climates typical of temperate rain forests are characterized by high levels of precipitation, narrow and relatively cool temperature ranges.

From May 1<sup>st</sup> through September 1<sup>st</sup>, average maximum temperatures range between 53°F and 62°F and average minimum temperatures range between 41°F and 52°F.<sup>16</sup> The highest temperature ever recorded in Sitka was 89°F on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2004.<sup>17</sup> Mean annual precipitation in Sitka is approximately 86 inches a year.<sup>18</sup> Extreme summer weather in Sitka may include thunderstorms, hail, waterspouts (small tornados over water), and high elevation snowfall. Events such as these are not common, however, with Sitka averaging only two thunderstorms a year.<sup>19</sup>

Winter weather is also relatively mild with average temperatures ranging between 23°F and 35°F between.<sup>20</sup> The lowest temperature ever recorded in Sitka was -4°F on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1917.<sup>21</sup> The average annual snowfall here is approximately 40 inches.<sup>22</sup>

## GEOLOGY AND SOILS

Bedrock in the area is composed of greywacke, slate, conglomerate, and limestone. Overlying soil is likely thin and comprised mostly of decaying plant matter. Soils in some areas may contain tephra, an ash layer deposited by volcanic eruptions.<sup>23</sup>

## DRAINAGE

Although the depth of groundwater is unknown, if present it would be shallow or found in bedrock fractures; it is also likely that it would be subject to saltwater intrusion. Streams and springs have not been identified; there is some overland flow during heavy rains, but most precipitation absorbs into the soil.<sup>24</sup>

## VEGETATION

Not surprisingly, the causeway islands, having been cleared and blasted 50 years ago, are today covered with dense vegetation; even rock, which in a drier climate would be bare, is colonized by mosses, small plants, shrubs, or trees.<sup>25</sup> Tall stands of Sitka spruce and western hemlock cover portions of the islands, with elderberry and alder interspersed underneath. Thickets of salmonberry, alder, elderberry, and cow parsnip cloak portions of the islands that have shallower soils and that have been more recently disturbed. Groundcover on the islands typically consists of false lily-of-the-valley, a variety of grasses, and mosses. Other plants that may be observed include ferns, fireweed, currants, and rusty menziesia (see [Appendix C??](#) for a complete species list).

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16. Western Regional Climate Center 2005 (Period of Record: 09/01/49 through 12/31/2005)

17. NOAA 2006

18. Western Region Climate Center 2006 (Period of Record: 1949 through 2006)

19. NOAA 2006

20. Western Regional Climate Center 2005

21. NOAA, Winter Climate Guide to Southeast Alaska 2006

22. Western Region Climate Center 2006

23. Carson Dorn, Inc., *Phase I Environmental Assessment for the Sitka World War II Causeway*, 5.

24. Carson Dorn, Inc., *Phase I Environmental Assessment for the Sitka World War II Causeway*, 5.

25. USDA-FS, 1974.

## **WILDLIFE**

The causeway islands provide visitors opportunities to see a variety of marine life, including whales, sea lions, sea otters, stars, sea urchins, barnacles, clams, limpets, and crabs. Bird viewing opportunities are also plentiful; Bald eagles and a variety of seabirds are commonly seen on or near these islands, and songbirds can be heard throughout the park during summer. Land mollusks such as large slugs and turbate snails are plentiful in the park's lush vegetation. Do not expect to see large land mammals in the park; land-based access to these islands is restricted by the airport runway on Japonski Island, and though many large land mammals can swim, the presence of bears or deer is very unlikely (see [Appendix C??](#) for a complete species list).

# THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

People travel to and live in Sitka for many reasons; the Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park's current and potential visitors' knowledge of Fort Rousseau's history and their expectations for receiving information vary greatly. In an effort to provide visitors an opportunity to have meaningful experiences and in order to plan effectively, it is important to assess current visitor profiles and motivations. Likewise, this section also details the intended target audience—the type of visitors the park anticipates and wants to serve—and the associated visitor experience goals.

## VISITOR PROFILES

Data specific to Fort Rousseau's visitors has not been gathered, therefore, the current visitor profiles describe Sitka residents and visitors in general.

### **SITKA RESIDENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

The most recent U.S. Census data (taken in 2000) shows that Sitka's 8,835 residents were a median age of 35.2 years old;<sup>26</sup> more recent data gathered by the State Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development shows the 2008 population was slightly lower at 8,615.<sup>27</sup> In 2000, the two largest race groups in Sitka were white (68.5%) and American Indian or Alaska Native (18.6%); other races represented in the community include: Asian (3.8%), Hispanic or Latino (3.3%), "other" (0.9), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (0.4%), and Black or African American (0.3%).<sup>28</sup>

Residents employed by the government, and the trade, transportation, and utilities, healthcare, seafood, and tourism industries comprise the majority of the local workforce and the economy is considered well balanced.<sup>29</sup>

Specific to residents' interest in recreation, the *Sitka Trail Plan, 2003*, states efforts to enhance the appreciation of cultural landmarks, historical places, and architecture elicited strong support from the community. Results from the Sitka Trail Survey and public comments gathered during the writing of the *Sitka Trail Plan, 2003* showed that 84% of respondents supported urban historic trails and 76% supported backcountry historic trails. In addition, 50% of those providing comments on the *Sitka Trail Plan, 2003*'s second draft supported the Fort Rousseau Causeway cultural trail project.<sup>30</sup>

### **VISITOR DEMOGRAPHICS**

According to a 2006 Union College study, the majority of visitors to Sitka are over the age of 35 (83%) and residents of the United States (85%). Nearly half (47%) of respondents were traveling in parties of two, followed by groups of three or four (27%) and groups of seven or more (11%). Only seven percent of Sitka Visitors were traveling by themselves. The amount of time that visitors spent in Sitka was based on whether or not they were

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26. U.S. Census Bureau, *Sitka city and borough, Alaska* "Fact Sheet," <http://www.census.gov>.

27. State of Alaska, *Community Database Online*, Sitka.

28. U.S. Census Bureau, *Sitka city and borough, Alaska* "Fact Sheet," <http://www.census.gov>.

29. McDowell Group, Inc. *State of the Sitka Economy, 2009 Update*, 2.

30. *Sitka Trail Plan 2003*, 45.



cruise passengers, who spent an average of five and a half hours in Sitka while those visitors traveling independently spent an average of eight nights.<sup>31</sup>

## MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

The majority of visitors to Sitka are cruise passengers; in 2008, it was reported that, out of the 374,600 people who visited Sitka (an increase of 16% from 2007), 289,800 arrived by cruise ship, while 66,800 and 18,000 arrived by air and the Alaska Marine Highway System ferry, respectively (see Figure 1).<sup>32</sup>

SITKA VISITOR TRAFFIC INDICATORS, 2002-2008

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Cruise passengers	250,200	256,800	232,400	229,800	267,000	234,000	289,800
Air passengers	68,200	68,300	73,000	71,800	69,800	72,700	66,800
Ferry passengers	14,000	13,500	15,000	13,300	13,400	14,900	18,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332,400</b>	<b>338,600</b>	<b>320,900</b>	<b>314,900</b>	<b>350,200</b>	<b>321,600</b>	<b>374,600</b>

**Figure 1.** Sitka Visitor Traffic Indicators, 2002-2008

Source: McDowell Group, Inc. *State of the Sitka Economy*, 2009 Update, 5.

## ACTIVITIES

The 2006 Union College survey included two questions aimed at what tours and/or activities visitors to Sitka planned on taking: (1) “which guided tours did you purchase or plan to purchase” and (2) “what other places or sites did you visit in Sitka on your own (not as part of a group tour)?”

When asked about tours purchased or intended to purchase, 55% had purchased at least one tour, while 45% indicated they had not or did not intend to purchase a guided tour. While the researchers did not ask respondents to explain “why,” they did glean from conversations and observations that visitors’ desire to explore on their own, the cost of tours, and limited time were deterrents to booking tours. “Limited time” is particularly true for cruise passengers, who only average five and a half hours in port.<sup>33</sup>

Of those who did purchase guided tours, 13% went on the “Sitka Tour” bus ride that tours the town and places like the Raptor Center and the New Archangel Dancers. The “Sitka Tribal Tour” was the next most popular tour booked (10%). Kayaking, hiking, and other tours that involved physical activity were taken by a small percentage of respondents. The average age of visitors, limited time in port, and inclement weather were the most likely factors in not choosing these tours.<sup>34</sup>

The second question regarding what activities, places, or sites they had gone to independent of a tour, elicited a variety of responses, with cultural activities being the most popular; the three most popular attractions were the

31. Union College, *Sitka Visitors’ Survey 2006*, 3-5.

32. McDowell Group, Inc. *State of the Sitka Economy*, 2009 Update, 5.

33. Union College, *Sitka Visitors’ Survey 2006*, 9-10.

34. Union College, *Sitka Visitors’ Survey 2006*, 10-11.

Sitka National Historical Park (36%), St. Michael's Cathedral (30%), and the Russian Bishop's House (24%). Twenty-one percent of visitors went to the Alaska Raptor Center, which surprised researchers because of its inconvenient location and poor transportation to the site. Interestingly, researchers believed that part of the reason the site was popular—besides visitors' natural attraction to Alaska wildlife—was because it was listed in a brochure given to cruise ship passengers on the Holland America line prior to disembarking.<sup>35</sup>

## CURRENT FORT ROUSSEAU VISITATION

The only recorded data regarding visitation to the Fort Rousseau Causeway SHP is collected by Sitka Sound Ocean Adventures during their guided kayak tours. In the summer of 2009, 54 visitors took part in the company's "Islands Paddle and Lost Fort Trek" tour. Visitors found the information about the tour on the company's website and scheduled a tour before their vacation.<sup>36</sup>

## POTENTIAL FORT ROUSSEAU VISITATION

Fort Rousseau Causeway SHP will be developed, managed, and maintained for the benefit of all Alaskans and visitors. It is likely that the majority of park users will be Sitka community members and the division, therefore wants to ensure that planning and implementation for park access, recreation, and facilities meets the needs of this all-ages community; however, planning and implementation will also equally consider the needs of visitors to Sitka.

Permitting for commercial operations would provide the division with income to support ongoing park maintenance. As the included visitor data shows for cruise ship passengers (the largest and principal visitor group), the average age of visitors, their limited time in port, and inclement weather influence their decision making when choosing on-shore tours; the division could deduce that the number of cruise ship passengers interested and able to tour the causeway islands by kayak or boat will be small. However, the possibility of commercial operations providing stable funding for park maintenance still needs to be studied and discussed.

School groups are also considered a potential audience. Fort Rousseau Causeway SHP provides an excellent field trip opportunity for local school children, particularly elementary schools. By providing resources for teachers to incorporate a Fort Rousseau field trip into their history curriculum, the division would be working toward goals outlined in their ten-year strategic plan.<sup>37</sup> In addition, providing the opportunity for children to visit the park and engage in active learning will help to promote stewardship for the park, physical activity, and the importance of preserving our historic places. To promote active learning, the division could work with local Sitka teachers to discuss how interpretation, both personal and non-personal, and the park's historical features could enhance their students' learning experience.

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35. Union College, *Sitka Visitors' Survey 2006*, 11-12.

36. John Dunlap, phone conversation with author, August 20, 2009.

37. The "Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation Ten-Year Strategic Plan, 2007-2017" details statewide planning goals, objectives, and action plan strategies. Under the "Outreach, Education, and Interpretation" goals, Objective III ("Increase public awareness of the value and importance of Alaska's natural, archaeological and historic resources and promote the health benefits of recreation"), Action Strategy 3 encourages "supporting the development of elementary, secondary and post-secondary programs about Alaska's environmental, archaeological and historic resources. As part of this effort, encourage and continue to provide opportunities to school, educational and youth groups to use the state park system for educational purposes and provide interpretative [interpretive] programs for hotels, tour boats, etc. as appropriate."

## EXISTING VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The following section presents an overview of the Fort Rousseau Causeway SHP visitor experience as it existed at the onset of this planning process.

### **CURRENT CONDITIONS**

To reach the causeway visitors must use water-based transportation; access by land is not permitted (for a detailed description of current access, see the “Existing Conditions and Issues” section). After an approximate 15-minute boat ride from Sitka Harbor—or a longer kayak paddle—visitors most often enter Whiting Harbor and disembark on Sasedni Island. On the approach, tidal inhabitants and eelgrass provide visitors with an array of eye-catching colors. Caution must be taken not to disturb eelgrass beds.

Stepping onto the rocky shore, visitors are greeted by slippery kelp and a shoreline covered with trees. Rough-hewn rock steps built by volunteers encourage visitors to use the well-worn trails; the steps, however, are not accessible. There are no orientation signs on the causeway. Overgrown vegetation encroaches on the trails, giving the site an overall sense of mystery and discovery. Many of the bushes are salmon berry; during July the gold and red berries provide visitors a tasty treat. Although the causeway is beginning to reclaim its historic structures, access inside magazines and other sites is still possible.

### **GOLD AND VIRUBLENNOI ISLANDS**

From the landing site at Whiting Harbor, the southeast trail leads to Gold and Virublennoi islands. A hand-painted sign made by Sitka Trail Works, Inc. identifies the buildings on Gold Island as the wooden fuse house and two-story bunker. Ladders within the cool, mossy bunker allow visitors to climb to the roof where an instrument mount is located. Visitors can also walk up the hill to access the roof of the bunker and catch a glimpse of Sitka Sound through the trees.

Following the causeway and trails east leads to Virublennoi Island. Visitors can explore three ammunition magazines on Virublennoi Island. The closest ammunition magazine to the volleyball court is easily accessible; however, the entrance has been used most recently as a dump site. After a short walk down the trail, visitors can see a decomposing metal crane, which provides visitors the opportunity to see machinery from the WWII era. There is also a dump site located on the shoreline filled with broken tiles and metal objects.

### **SASEDNI ISLAND**

A trail running the length of Sasedni Island can be followed if visitors head northeast after disembarking from their boat. Devil’s club and wild parsnip make access to many of the historic structures difficult, but Sasedni Island has great potential. Four, three-inch anti-aircraft positions are the first structures visible and accessed by this trail. A hand-painted sign identifies one of the positions to the left; visitors are able to climb inside to explore. The other three positions are not easily viewed from the trail, but provide an opportunity for the adventurous to discover. The trail continues toward the motor pool area, site of the officers’ quarters, and additional features, including a 20mm, AA four-gun battery.

## KIRUSHKIN ISLAND

The causeway has been breached between Sasedni and Kirushkin islands. Kirushkin Island housed a major residential area at Fort Rousseau. All that remains of the many barracks and mess hall are foundations. Fire hydrants and telephone pole remnants are scattered along the causeway road, the only street in this neighborhood. The lone standing building was the temporary Artillery Command Post in 1942; the building is concrete, partially buried with rock and brush, and hidden in the trees. The date “1942” is stamped into the concrete just inside the entrance.<sup>38</sup>

## MOGILNOI ISLAND

Mogilnoi Island, located between Kirushkin and Makhnati islands, does not contain any existing historic structures.

## MAKHNATI ISLAND

The causeway is breached between Mogilnoi and Makhnati islands. It is passable if navigated carefully, but in general visitors arrive at Makhnati Island by boat. Makhnati Island was the headquarters of the Sitka Harbor Defense and therefore houses some of the most interesting sites and buildings at Fort Rousseau. Due to tall, dense spruce covering the island, the undergrowth is much thinner than on the other islands, which gives an airy feel and makes it easier to explore; however, there are no orientation signs or signs identifying the buildings. A trail leads visitors to two ammunition magazines that have large, metal entrances surrounded by concrete and moss. The magazines are dark and damp inside, so a flashlight is essential, plus garbage left behind by local partiers can be hazardous.

The trail continues past partially concealed concrete vent shafts to the main headquarters building of Battery 292. Battery 292 includes a large, concrete structure with many rooms, a command station on top, and two, six-inch guns. It is easy to become disoriented inside Battery 292, as there are many turns, hallways, and rooms. Many of the rooms still contain evidence of their wartime uses, including ceiling tiles made of sugar cane and holes where electrical and communication wires ran. The six-inch gun emplacements are large, circular depressions located near the island’s edge and are great places to explore and get a sense for what it was like to be a gunman at Fort Rousseau. The battery commander’s station and the Coincidence Range Finder are located on top of Battery 292, making this one of the most intriguing spots on the causeway. Visitors can climb a ladder into the observation area and peer between the trees to the ocean, just as soldiers did while searching for enemy craft.

After exiting Battery 292, visitors can explore the Harbor Defense Command Post/Harbor Entrance Control Post. Vegetation partially conceals the hillside entrance. The building is damp and dark, and metal and wooden debris is still present in some of the rooms. A large, open fuel tank full of water is located outside the command post and should be carefully navigated around.

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38. Sitka’s WWII Site, [www.sitkaww2.com/](http://www.sitkaww2.com/), Harbor Defenses, Kirushkin.

## VISITOR EXPERIENCE GOALS

Visitor experience goals describe the opportunities that should be available to causeway visitors of all ages and abilities, including the opportunities to have physical, intellectual, and emotional experiences.

**FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK** will provide opportunities to:

- Discover and explore causeway structures and installations in their natural state;
- Explore a representative selection of *cleaned*, *stabilized*, and *preserved* causeway structures and installations;
- Travel a network of accessible trails;
- Picnic and camp in established areas;
- Explore the park using all five senses;
- Relate to soldiers' experiences and life in Sitka during WWII;
- Learn about causeway buildings and installations through diverse interpretive media, including panels, brochures, audio tours, and personal tours given by on-site volunteers and park staff; and
- Experience the causeway in a manner that instills an appreciation for the site, both past and present.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ISSUES

The following section presents an overview of the park's existing conditions and management issues. The next section, "Recommendations," provides ideas for preserving and enhancing the park's conditions and mitigating concerns.

## LAND OWNERSHIP

Ownership of the causeway islands, the causeway itself, and the surrounding intertidal zone is complex. The Sitka Naval Operating Base, including Fort Ray and Fort Rousseau, were decommissioned in 1944 and the property was transferred to the federal government. The causeway islands became eligible for state selection in 1963 and the lands were officially conveyed to the state in 1968. The conveyance did not, however, include submerged lands or intertidal areas, which remained under federal ownership by the Bureau of Land Management.<sup>39</sup>

On March 4, 2008, House Bill 176, sponsored by Representative Peggy Wilson, designated the 60-acre Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park (SHP). Alaska Governor Sarah Palin signed House Bill 176 into law on April 2, 2008. The park, however, still lies within the Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport management area, managed by the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and overseen by the Federal Aviation Administration. The submerged lands and intertidal area are still under federal ownership by the Bureau of Land Management.

## ACCESS

Visitors must use water-based transportation to reach the park; access by land is not permitted. The causeway is attached to the land base of Sitka at Japonski Island; however, the Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport and its runway, located on Japonski Island, block access to the causeway. A fence surrounds the airport runway to prevent unauthorized access. Crossing the runway is not only dangerous but violates airport security.

Most park users access the park by boat at Whiting Harbor and disembark on Sasedni Island. Access to other islands is weather and tide dependent.

## FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

### **HISTORIC STRUCTURES**

The structures on Fort Rousseau were built in 1941-1943. When the fort was decommissioned in 1944, some of the structures were dismantled and sent elsewhere; others were left on the causeway and not maintained. Today, all of the structures are open to exploration; however some of the structures are safer due to less deterioration and better sources of natural light. There are sharp objects strewn about and holes in the floor in many of the structures; some of the holes have been covered with plywood. The structures on Makhnati Island are easier to find due to less vegetation on the island and appear to be in the best shape overall. On Sasedni and Gold islands many of the structures are covered with plants and organic matter. The dampness of the islands is also affecting the structures by causing concrete leeching and creating standing water. Organic matter and metals are staining

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39. Carson Dorn, Inc., *Phase I Environmental Assessment for the Sitka World War II Causeway*, 3.

the structures in some locations and spalling (concrete chipping) is occurring in others. Some structures have graffiti.

#### VIRUBLENNOI ISLAND

- Three ammunitions magazines: INCOMPLETE
- Concrete bunker: INCOMPLETE

#### GOLD ISLAND

- Wooden Fuse House: INCOMPLETE
- Two-story bunker: INCOMPLETE

#### SASEDNI ISLAND

- Four, three-inch anti-aircraft gun positions: INCOMPLETE
- Meteorological station: INCOMPLETE
- Concrete slab from 20mm anti-aircraft gun battery: INCOMPLETE
- Concrete foundation for pump station: INCOMPLETE
- Two wooden pilings for tidal station: INCOMPLETE

#### KIRUSHKIN ISLAND

- Temporary Artillery Command Post: INCOMPLETE
- Several concrete foundations: INCOMPLETE

#### MAKHNATI ISLAND

- Two ammunitions magazines: INCOMPLETE
- Harbor Defense Command Post: INCOMPLETE
- Harbor Entrance Control Post: INCOMPLETE
- Collapsed wooden observation tower: INCOMPLETE
- Two, six-inch gun batteries: INCOMPLETE
- Two, 155mm gun emplacements: INCOMPLETE
- Two tank containment vaults: INCOMPLETE
- Stone foundation: INCOMPLETE

## TRAILS

Narrow walking trails that follow the original causeway road were constructed by Sitka Trail Works, Inc., and are present on Virublenoi, Gold, Sasedni, and Makhnati islands. The trails are nice for the able bodied, but are not universally accessible. Most of the trails follow the original road alignment; however, some trails have formed where the distance between historical sites/features is shortest.

## OTHER

There are no developed facilities, other than trails, in the park.

## RECREATION

The causeway islands offer a variety of recreational activities for visitors. The causeway islands are located in close proximity to Sitka, so Sitkans are able to take their boats or kayaks to the islands for a day trip or overnight camping trip. Although there are no designated camping sites on the islands, there are several commonly used camping spots. Narrow walking trails provide guidance to historic features and it is possible for the able bodied to walk the causeway's entire length at low tide.

The islands' rocky shoreline provides many interesting places for kayakers to paddle, explore the intertidal zone, and disembark to explore the causeway. While on the islands, many visitors enjoy photography and wildlife viewing. During the summer, park visitors also harvest salmonberries, as well as a variety of different plants, including goosetongue, Devil's Club, beach asparagus, and Labrador Tea.

Only one kayak tour company, Sitka Sound Ocean Adventures, provides guided tours of the causeway islands. On the "Islands Paddle and Lost Fort Trek," visitors spend one hour on a guided, exploratory walk in the park. The tour takes place on either Sasedni Island or Makhnati Island depending on the weather and tide.

## INTERPRETATION

Existing Fort Rousseau-related interpretation is limited. The following paragraphs provide a summary of current personal and non-personal interpretation about the park. **Personal interpretation** occurs when one person is interpreting to another, such as during a guided tour. **Non-personal interpretation** occurs when the person interpreting is removed and replaced with another type of media, such as an interpretive display, audio tour, or self-guided brochure.

## PERSONAL INTERPRETATION

### SITKA SOUND OCEAN ADVENTURES

Sitka Sound Ocean Adventures is a Sitka-based kayak tour company that offers an "Islands Paddle and Lost Fort Trek" tour. On this 3.5-hour tour, visitors paddle to the causeway islands and explore the park on foot with their guide, who interprets the park's historical features based on his or her own personal interests and knowledge of the resource. The tour is advertised on Sitka Sound Ocean Adventure's website ([www.kayaksitka.com](http://www.kayaksitka.com)) and also on a display at Crescent Harbor when the cruise ships dock. Tours are scheduled from May through September.



## SITKA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Staff at the Sitka Historical Museum, located in Centennial Hall, provides visitors with information and stories about a variety of displays and artifacts about Sitka's Tlingit, Russian, and American history, including Fort Rousseau.

## NON-PERSONAL INTERPRETATION

### SITKA HISTORICAL MUSEUM

The Sitka Historical Museum's WWII exhibit, which includes information on Fort Rousseau, is the largest dedicated section and exhibit in the museum, with nearly 30 linear feet of display. The museum also has an extensive collection of WWII era photos, documents, artifacts, and reports on the era and continues to receive similar donations. Serving the community year round, the museum also distributes a walking tour map that guides visitors to Sitka's National Historic Landmarks and other key attractions.

### FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK (ON-SITE)

There is no existing non-personal interpretation on the causeway.

## EVALUATION OF INTERPRETIVE SITES AND MATERIALS

There is currently no evaluation of the effectiveness and quality of interpretive sites and materials.

## INFORMATION AND ORIENTATION

## WEBSITES

### SITKA'S WWII SITE

Sitka's WWII Site, [www.sitkaww2.com](http://www.sitkaww2.com), was created by local Sitka teacher and historian, Matt Hunter. Also a member of the Sitka State Parks Citizen's Advisory Board, Matt has spent years researching the fort's history and documenting its current conditions. The website provides a detailed overview of the Sitka Naval Operating Base and the harbor defenses and is the most comprehensive website for information on the causeway's historic structures, historical information, and photographs from the WWII era.

### SITKA MARITIME HERITAGE SOCIETY

The Sitka Maritime Heritage Society maintains a website that provides a brief overview of the fort's history (<http://sitkamaritime.org/>). The Sitka Maritime Heritage Society is also currently rehabilitating the Japonski Island Boathouse, located within the Sitka Naval Operating Base National Historic Landmark, to create a commemorative museum and working boathouse for the community. The boathouse would include an interpretive center, and possibly a marine trailhead with a kayak rental facility.

## TRAVEL GUIDES

There are a variety of travel publications that reference the causeway islands as a hiking destination; however, accessibility and other planning tips are unavailable.

## FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK (ON-SITE)

There is no existing non-personal interpretation on the causeway.

## INFORMATION SIGNS

There are a limited number of information signs in the park and no orientation signs; safety and regulatory signs are non-existent. The only signs present on the causeway are hand-painted signs that label a few of the historic structures. Sitka Trail Works, Inc. painted and placed the signs in preparation for the park's dedication in 2008.

## OPERATIONS AND STAFFING

The park is currently patrolled bi-monthly or monthly, staff and weather permitting. The Sitka State Parks staff is also currently operating without a boat and is therefore dependent on the ranger's personal watercraft or others.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Sitka Trail Works, Inc., and the Sitka State Parks Citizens Advisory Board are integral partners in helping maintain and fostering support for the park. These groups were also responsible for garnering support for establishing the fort as a State Historical Park.

Since 2003, Sitka Trail Works, Inc. has been the lead agency in working to restore Fort Rousseau as a public recreation and cultural interpretation site. The "World War II Causeway" cultural interest trails project description in the *Sitka Trails Plan, 2003* has served as a guide for the not-for-profit in securing funding for projects. In 2006, Sitka Trail Works, Inc. received a federal grant to begin development work on the causeway, including trail restoration and environmental assessments; a portion of that funding was used to develop this management plan.

Since the fort was dedicated a State Historical Park in 2008, the organization has still been heavily involved—and will hopefully continue to be—in Fort Rousseau's preservation and project development.

Other partners include the City and Borough of Sitka and the Sitka Historical Society.

## SAFETY

## HISTORIC STRUCTURES

The visitor experience at Fort Rousseau is exploratory and undeveloped. The remaining historic structures and features have not, for the most part, been altered since the base was decommissioned and do pose some safety concerns. In a few areas, measures have been taken to mitigate these concerns—such as placing plywood over holes and fencing around structures—but the measures are not standard and all-inclusive.

Several of the easily accessible historic structures are also littered with garbage, some of it potentially a safety hazard.

## ENVIRONMENTAL

### U.S. ARMY CORP OF ENGINEERS, CON/HTRW PROJECT

The “Project Closeout Report: Containerized Hazardous, Toxic, and Radioactive Waste (CON/HTRW)” prepared by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE), describes USACE’s responsibility for cleaning former military activities sites as follows:

*“The Defense Environmental Restoration Program for Formerly Used Defense Sites (DERP-FUDS) authorizes the cleanup of contamination resulting from past military activities at sites no longer owned by the Department of Defense (DOD). A containerized hazardous and toxic waste (CON/HTRW) project (F10AK035003) was authorized at Fort Rousseau located near Sitka, Alaska on 31 March 1993.*

*The Fort Rousseau CON/HTRW project (F10AK035003) is being recommended for closure based on previous site investigations conducted between 1985 and 1995. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is an agent for the Department of Defense (DOD) and has been assigned the responsibility of coordinating activities at DERP-FUDS sites. This project closeout report is issued by the USACE Alaska District, the lead agency for Fort Rousseau.”<sup>40</sup>*

The report describes site visits taken by, or under contract by USACE, in 1985, 1992, and 1995, and also describes the phase I and II environmental assessments contracted to Carson Dorn, Inc. by Sitka Trail Works, Inc. The report concluded the following:

1. Since DERP-FUDS CON/HTRW projects are primarily concerned with clean up of aboveground and underground storage tanks and other containerized hazardous waste, and;
2. Since the investigations between 1985 and 1995 established that the fuel tanks associated with underground concrete vaults were either removed or never installed and no evidence of other containerized hazardous or toxic waste were observed at Fort Rousseau, that no further action is warranted under the DERP-FUDS CON/HTRW project; and
3. The project was recommended for closure based on the investigations between 1985 and 2006.

The report did recommend, however, that since the 2006 Carson Dorn, Inc. Phase 1 Environmental Assessment did identify potentially contaminated soils on Makhnati, Virublennoi, Kirushkin, and Sasedni islands that may be affected by damaged batteries or other hazardous waste, that USACE would revise the Fort Rousseau Inventory Project Report (INPR) to add a hazardous, toxic, and radioactive (HTRW) project under DERP-FUDS to address those concerns.<sup>41</sup>

The above report was signed by the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Department of Defense Environmental Program Manager in September of 2009. According to the DEC, Contaminated Sites Database, all environmental work conducted at the fort after this date will be conducted under a new HTRW project.<sup>42</sup>

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40. U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, *Project Closeout Report: Containerized Hazardous, Toxic, & Radioactive Waste*, 3.

41. U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, *Project Closeout Report: Containerized Hazardous, Toxic, & Radioactive Waste*, 4-6.

42. State of Alaska, Department of Environmental Conservation, *Contaminated Sites Database*, accessed 12/01/09.

### Phase I Environmental Assessment

In June 2006, Carson Dorn, Inc., under contract with Sitka Trail Works, Inc., conducted a site inspection at Fort Rousseau as the first part of a two-phase environmental assessment as mentioned above; only Makhnati, Kirushkin, Sasedni, Gold, and Virublennoi islands were inspected.<sup>43</sup>

The group identified the following potential contamination issues and recommendations:

#### Potential Contamination Issues

1. Lead batteries and associated soil located outside Ammunitions Magazine #1 on Makhnati;
2. Additional lead batteries located inside the same magazine;
3. Zinc and mercury from batteries on Virublennoi;
4. Other lead acid batteries on Virublennoi reported by others, but not Carson Dorn, Inc.;
5. Beach dump site on Virublennoi;
6. Area of potentially distressed vegetation on Sasedni;
7. Possible petroleum contamination from historic vehicle and equipment maintenance activities on Sasedni;
8. Asbestos containing materials tested on Makhnati, Virublennoi, and Gold islands;
9. Lead cable, both submerged and in upland areas throughout the causeway; and
10. Metal and potentially other debris documented by underwater camera surveys performed by Sitka Tribe of Alaska.<sup>44</sup>

#### Recommendations

1. Sample and clean soil and batteries located on Makhnati;
2. Clean up air-polarized batteries and plates identified on Virublennoi; sample soil after debris is removed;
3. Sample motor pool area on Sasedni to check for contamination from vehicle and equipment maintenance;
4. Remove and dispose lead cable; and
5. Clean up, abate, and dispose of loose asbestos containing materials; identify, with signage, structures that contain asbestos materials.<sup>45</sup>

### Phase II Environmental Assessment

Carson Dorn, Inc. also performed a Phase II Environmental Assessment in the summer of 2009 to test soils and quantify potential contamination issues that were identified in the Phase I Environmental Assessment. As during the 2006 assessment, Phase II samples were limited to Makhnati, Kirushkin, Sasedni, Gold, and Virublennoi islands.<sup>46</sup>

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43. Carson Dorn, Inc., *Phase I Environmental Assessment for the Sitka World War II Causeway*, 10.

44. Carson Dorn, Inc., *Phase I Environmental Assessment for the Sitka World War II Causeway*, 16-17.

45. Carson Dorn, Inc., *Phase I Environmental Assessment for the Sitka World War II Causeway*, 17-18.

46. Carson Dorn, Inc., *Phase II Environmental Assessment for the Sitka World War II Causeway*, 5-6.

All specific issues of concern identified in the Phase I assessment were tested during Phase II. The Phase II assessment recommends creating a cleanup action plan to address the following contamination issues:

#### *MAKHNATI ISLAND*

- Ammunition Magazine #1: Excessive concentrations of Alaska Department of Conservation and Environmental Conservation (ADEC) lead, arsenic, and chromium concentrations at the broken lead-acid battery site outside the magazine; excessive diesel range organics (DRO) criteria near the ventilation duct at the front of the magazine; small quantities of DRO contaminated soil; small quantities of lead contaminated soil at the magazine associated with the broken batteries

#### *VIRUBLENNOI ISLAND*

- Beach Dump: Excessive concentrations of lead, mercury, cadmium, barium, arsenic, chromium, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) at the broken air-polarized batteries site; moderate quantities of lead, cadmium, and mercury contaminated soil at the broken air-polarized batteries site

#### *SASEDNI ISLAND*

- Crushed Metal Drum: Excessive levels of DRO
- Motor Pool Area: Excessive levels of arsenic and chromium
- Lead Cable: Excessive levels of arsenic

#### *KIRUSHKIN ISLAND*

- Disturbed Vegetation Area: Excessive levels of arsenic and chromium<sup>47</sup>

Sitka Trail Works, Inc. has signed a Letter of Agreement with Carson Dorn, Inc. for preparation of a cleanup action plan; however, the plan parameters were still being discussed as of December 3, 2009.

## MAINTENANCE

Maintenance on site is limited. During bi-monthly to monthly patrols of the park, staff personnel will pack out some garbage and survey the area for damage. There is no current maintenance performed on the historic structures.

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47. Carson Dorn, Inc., *Phase II Environmental Assessment for the Sitka World War II Causeway*, 16-18.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section provides recommendations for mitigating concerns/issues presented in the previous section and for enhancing park conditions and the visitor experience.

## LAND OWNERSHIP

The plan recommends continuing to foster a good working relationship with the Department of Transportation and Public Facilities and the Sitka Rocky Gutierrez Airport and ultimately finishing the transfer of ownership and management of the causeway islands to the Department of Natural Resources. The plan also recommends continuing to foster a good working relationship with the Bureau of Land Management and the Sitka Tribe of Alaska regarding management and use of the causeway itself and the surrounding intertidal zone.

## ACCESS

### **LAND ACCESS**

The division does not recommend measures to reestablish access to the causeway island via its connection to Japonski Island at this time. Although the fort was historically accessible by land via Japonski Island, the division understands the importance of airport security and the Federal Highway Administration's concerns regarding trespassing.

### **MARINE ACCESS**

Enhancing marine access to the park is suitable and appropriate. The division recommends enhancing marine access to the park by developing one or all of the following: (1) a kayaking landing; (2) a small boat landing; and (3) a large-craft/barge landing.

The location and designs for these landing areas have not been determined at this time. Choosing the location, design, and materials will be dependent on funding and further inspection of the area by engineers and park managers. However, it is likely that the kayak and small boat landing zones will be recommended for Whiting Harbor off Sasedni Island.

It is also likely that a kayak or small boat landing area on Makhnati Island will be necessary. The location, design, and materials for this landing will be dependent on funding and further inspection of the area by engineers and park managers. For possible locations, see figure X (NEED TO INCLUDE).

## FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The "Facilities and Infrastructure Concept Design" (figure X – TO BE DEVELOPED) presents an idea for how facilities and infrastructure might be placed in the park. The following are explanations for the proposed facilities and infrastructure.

## HISTORIC STRUCTURES

The division recommends cleaning and preserving a representative selection of historic structures and leaving the majority in their natural state. Leaving historic structures in their natural state preserves the sense of adventure and discovery cherished by many local residents. The *Fort Rousseau Causeway State Historical Park Preservation Plan*, being developed by the Office of History and Archaeology, with assistance from the Interpretation and Education Unit, will provide specific recommendations regarding preservation techniques for preserving the park's historic structures.

### VIRUBLENNOI ISLAND

**INCOMPLETE** – ammunition magazine (clean, preserve, and interpret); crane (interpret)

### GOLD ISLAND

**INCOMPLETE** – wooden fuse house (restore, interpret); two-story bunker (clean, preserve, and interpret)

### SASEDNI ISLAND

**INCOMPLETE** – One, three-inch anti-aircraft position (clean, preserve, interpret); meteorological station (interpret)

### MAKHNATI ISLAND

**INCOMPLETE** – two ammunition magazines (clean, preserve, interpret); Battery 292, including six-inch guns (clean, preserve, sign, interpret); one, 155-mm gun mount (interpret).

## TRAILS

It is recommended that an improved trail system be developed connecting Virublennoi and Gold Islands to Sasedni Island, and eventually from Sasedni Island to Makhnati Island. These trails would also travel on to the islands themselves and lead visitors to historic structures and recreational areas.

### SITE CONCEPT AND SPECIFICS TO BE INCLUDED IN SECOND DRAFT

#### SASEDNI ISLAND TO GOLD AND VIRUBLENNOI ISLANDS

This minimum four-foot-wide, hard-packed accessible trail would lead southeast from Sasedni Island to Gold and Virublennoi Islands. The trail would ideally follow the historic road alignment and lead visitors to the wooden fuse house and two-story bunker on Gold Island, and then on to an ammunition magazine and crane on Virublennoi Island. It is also possible that Virublennoi Island could support a picnic area. Trailside interpretation with small pullouts would enhance the visitor experience.

## **SASEDNI ISLAND**

From the south end of Sasedni Island, a minimum four-foot-wide, hard-packed accessible trail system with small pullouts would lead north to historic features, a central interpretive hub, the day-use area, and camping and picnic areas. The main trail would ideally follow the historic road alignment to the day-use area. A dirt walking path—with trailside interpretation—could circumnavigate the island and connect to the accessible trail system and day-use area. Trails and infrastructure on Sasedni Island will be accessible to the greatest extent possible. For a detailed description of proposed Sasedni Island facilities and infrastructure, please see the information under “Other” further along in this section.

## **SASEDNI ISLAND TO MAKHNATI ISLAND**

The causeway between Sasedni and Kirushkin islands and between Kirushkin, Migilnoi, and Makhnati islands contains major breeches and is at times impassable. When funding allows, it is recommended that the causeway be repaired and an improved walking trail constructed to connect the recreational area on Sasedni Island to the historical features on Makhnati Island.

## **MAKHNATI ISLAND**

The historic features on Makhnati Island, including Battery 292 and two, 155-mm gun mounts, provide a unique interpretive and exploratory opportunity. When funding becomes available to improve access to Makhnati Island and also to preserve historic features and make them safe for visitors, it is recommended that the trail system on the island be improved and made, in part, universally accessible. The trail would lead visitors to key history features and interpretive opportunities, including ammunitions magazines, Battery 292, the HDCEP/HECP Headquarters Bunker, and two, 155-mm gun mounts.

## **OTHER**

### **DAY-USE AREA — SASEDNI ISLAND**

A day-use area, complete with at least one covered shelter, picnic sites, and one toilet is recommended for Sasedni Island. The proposed location would be on the west side of the island—the exact location is to be determined. The day-use area would be accessed via the accessible trail system and would also provide access to the central interpretive hub. The site would provide opportunities for scenic views of Sitka Sound.

If possible, existing foundations from the motor pool area should be used to limit impact on the natural environment; environmental testing will need to be completed prior to construction to ensure soils are not contaminated. The location and type of toilet is dependent on the overall site plan and engineers’ recommendations.

All new facilities should complement the historical characteristics of the site; new facilities should not be designed to copy historical features, as they may be mistaken as such.

It is likely that the covered shelters and picnic sites will be on a first-come, first-serve basis.



## DESIGNATED CAMPING AREAS

Designated camping areas are recommended to limit impact on the natural environment and to deter from camping in other areas. There are currently several camping spots on the islands. For possible locations of designated camping spots, see figure X (TO BE INCLUDED IN SECOND DRAFT). Camping areas should allow for privacy and be located where they cannot be viewed from the day-use area, interpretive trail, etc.

It is likely that camping areas will be on a first-come, first-serve basis.

## PUBLIC USE CABIN

Public use cabins are an option for the park, but there are no specific recommendations at this time.

## CENTRAL INTERPRETIVE HUB/SHELTER—SASEDNI ISLAND

The central interpretive hub, located on Sasedni Island, would present—through static interpretive exhibits—the main interpretive theme for the park and provide the park’s historical context. The recommended facility would be a covered shelter with an estimated five interpretive displays. For themes and display specifics, see the “Interpretation” recommendations in this section. The size, materials, and exact location are yet to be determined.

The associated visitor experience would ideally allow visitors to “discover” the hub and day-use area from the landing and accessible trail system; there would be wayfinding signage, but the hub would not be visible from the landings and would blend in with the natural environment.

## ON-SITE CARETAKER FACILITY

An on-site caretaker facility in the park is critical. The facility would provide housing for an employee or volunteer and also storage space for maintenance equipment. The on-site caretaker would help to, not only deter vandalism, but also provide visitors the opportunity for personal connections. The on-site caretaker would survey the facilities, trails, on-site interpretation, and historical features on a daily basis during the peak visitor season to ensure its maintenance, preservation, and safety measures were being met.

The on-site caretaker facility would most likely be located on Sasedni Island; its location and the type of facility are to be determined. It is most likely that a low-maintenance, concrete structure would be recommended to blend in with historic features. A low-cost system for heat/power would be established during the design stage.

The on-site caretaker facility would ideally be located in proximity to, but not visible from the day-use area.

## VISITOR CENTER FACILITY

If community and agency support and funding allowed, a visitor center facility could be built to replace the central interpretive hub and on-site caretaker facility. The building would act as a shared indoor exhibit space and on-site caretaker residence. Before implementation of such a facility, the division would show: (1) the need for this type of facility; (2) the community support for this facility; (3) the division’s support for this facility; and (4) a plan detailing how ongoing maintenance and operation of the facility would be funded.

The main purpose of this facility would be for the on-site caretaker residence, with a secondary purpose for exhibits.

## RECREATION

### **RECREATIONAL USERS**

Recreation at the Fort Rousseau Causeway SHP will be enhanced by providing improved marine access to the site, well-signed, accessible trails, and a designated day-use area. Users will still be able to participate in activities they have been enjoying on and around the causeway for years, including kayaking, beachcombing, hiking, wildlife viewing, and exploring. The primary recreational zone will be Sasedni Island and will be designed to complement the park's historic features.

### **COMMERCIAL OPERATORS**

Since access to the park is limited to the marine environment, commercial operators interested in ferrying visitors to and from the park or leading guided tours will be an important component in building and fostering visitation. Commercial operators can also play a critical role in delivering interpretive messages and helping the park meet its goals and objectives.

Commercial operators wishing to use the park will need to acquire the necessary permits; there will not be a separate commercial operating zone.

## INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is meant to enhance a visitor's experience by revealing what makes the site and/or resource special and, in effect, is a valuable management tool. Fort Rousseau interpretation will not only tell visitors what is interesting about the site but also aim to convince them of its value, encourage preservation, and instill a sense of community ownership in the park.

The following section outlines interpretive themes and the division's recommendations for personal and non-personal interpretive services.

### **INTERPRETIVE THEMES**

**THEMES** are the primary messages visitors should understand about a particular interpretive site or presentation. Themes bring a sense of continuity to a site and assist planners when organizing the content for interpretive materials. Each interpretive product developed will support one of the subthemes listed below.

#### **PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEME:**

**Fort Rousseau played an important role in the WWII defense structure in Sitka Sound; the fort and other local WWII installations changed the face of Sitka and still affect Sitkans today.**

#### **SUBTHEMES:**

1. **Increasing tensions between the U.S. and Japan prompted the U.S. to fortify its west coast during the late 1930s.**

- Alaska, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal formed a triangle of U.S. defense in the Pacific.
- Three naval air bases were constructed in Alaska starting in 1937; the Sitka Naval Air Station was completed in 1939.
- The Japanese invasion of Attu and Kiska islands in 1942 marked the first time U.S. soil had been occupied by a foreign entity since the War of 1812.

**2. The Sitka Naval Air Station, located on Japonski Island, brought thousands of enlisted personnel to Sitka. Fort Rousseau, including the causeway islands, became the headquarters for U.S. Army harbor defense and along with gun emplacements on Biorka Island and Shoals Point, fortified Sitka Sound.**

- The Sitka Naval Air Station was located on Japonski Island and in December, 1941, it was the only established military base in Alaska.
- The U.S. Army was tasked with defending the naval base and established headquarters at Fort Ray on Alice and Charcoal islands. When the Army outgrew their modest footprint, they expanded onto the causeway islands.
- Linking and developing the causeway islands was a difficult and expensive feat.
- Makhnati Island, the last island on the causeway, became the headquarters for harbor defense. Makhnati Island, along with the seven other connected islands, collectively became Fort Rousseau.
- Each island and its installations served different purposes.
- Life for soldiers stationed on the causeway was challenging and unique.
- Although fully prepared to engage in defensive tactics, the guns located at Fort Rousseau, Biorka Island, and Shoals Point were never fired.

**3. When the Japanese threat to the U.S. west coast dissipated, the naval base and army posts were transferred to other entities, but the installations left lasting impacts on the community.**

- The population, infrastructure, and culture surrounding the naval and army installations changed the area dramatically, the effects of which are still seen today.
- While some buildings were disassembled and removed, others were left behind and are used actively today.
- Fort Rousseau is a stunning example of the WWII era in Sitka and provides a myriad of opportunities for Sitkans to explore, recreate, and relate to their community's history.

## **PERSONAL SERVICES**

**NOT COMPLETE**

## **NON-PERSONAL SERVICES**

**NOT COMPLETE**

## **EVALUATION OF INTERPRETIVE SITES AND MATERIALS**

**NOT COMPLETE**

### INFORMATION AND ORIENTATION

#### **WEBSITES**

**NOT COMPLETE**

#### **TRAVEL GUIDES**

**NOT COMPLETE**

#### **FORT ROUSSEAU CAUSEWAY STATE HISTORICAL PARK (ON-SITE)**

**NOT COMPLETE**

#### **INFORMATION SIGNS**

**NOT COMPLETE**

### OPERATIONS AND STAFFING

**NOT COMPLETE**

### PARTNERSHIPS

**NOT COMPLETE**

### SAFETY

#### **HISTORIC STRUCTURES**

**NOT COMPLETE**

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL**

**NOT COMPLETE**

### MAINTENANCE

**NOT COMPLETE**

# IMPLEMENTATION PRIORITIES

NOT COMPLETE

# DESIGN GUIDELINES

NOT COMPLETE

# APPENDIX

NOT COMPLETE